



An expert demonstrates how the rice harvester works. PHOTO BY ROLAND D. NASASIRA.

# New rice harvester offers better harvest

Time seems up for rudimentary harvesting methods as researchers invent the rice harvester petrol engine powered tool for both commercial and smallholder farmers, **Roland D. Nasasira.**

Gone are the days when rice farmers hired farm labourers and spent a number of days harvesting their rice gardens.

However, with the introduction of the rice harvester, you can be able to save time spent on harvesting.

## Technology

One such farmer who has embraced the new technology that was introduced on the Ugandan market in February is Denis Ofwono, a farmer from Butaleja District.

At his farm which measures four acres, he recalls using the traditional method of rice harvesting by hand picking and U-shaped hand slashers to cut rice stems.

This would however take his labourers two to four days to harvest the four acre rice field. On average, labourers harvested one acre per day.

"When I embraced this technology, I started harvesting very early in the morning and by 2:00pm, all the four acres are covered. The remaining workload gathering the rice to collection point," Ofwono explains.

Another farmer, Robert Othieno who also hails from Butaleja District equally prides in the efficiency of the rice harvester.

"In an hour or less, I use the machine to harvest one acre of rice," Othieno says, adding that he used to spend between Shs50,000 to Shs70,000 on hiring labourers during the harvesting season. This also included the cost of feeding them.

## How the machine works

Joan Amooti, the Sales Assistant at China Huangpai Food Machines at Uganda Manufacturers' Association (UMA) show grounds at Lugogo says the rice harvester is a simple machine that eases the process of harvesting.

Physically, the rice harvester has the same shape as the powered engine slasher. The speed and rate of revolution of the cutting blades are just the same.

Like the slasher, the rice harvester also uses petrol fuel to run its light and small engine.

"You hold the machine either on your left or right hand side below your armpits as you operate it. It is from the handles that you adjust the speed," Amooti says.

In one hour, Amooti says the rice harvester has the capacity of harvesting two acres but that this is dependent on the operator's or farmer's operating speed.

On average, the rice harvester consumes approximately three litres of petrol fuel to harvest two acres of land.

## Service and maintenance

Like any other farm machine, the rice harvester does not go about its work without any service and maintenance.

You have to ensure that its engine oil is always the right amount to avoid friction.

At China Huangpai Food Machines, a farmer is trained how to use the machine on the onset of purchase which comes with a six months warranty. The machine costs Shs1.2m.

# 1.2m

COST OF THE RICE HARVESTER IN AGRIBUSINESS OUTLETS